

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 00460 201700Z
ACTION NEA-10

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STATE FOR NEA/ARN AND CU/NEA

E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS:
SUBJ: WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS REPORT JAN. 15-22

REF: DAMASCUS 402 AND 408

1. ACYPL VISIT FULLY DOCUMENTED IN REFTELS AND UPCOMING MEMCONS. IN BRIEF IT WAS THOROUGHLY SUCCESSFUL UNDERTAKING. CU DID WELL IN SELECTING UNDEMANDING, HARDWORKING GROUP. IN BAATH PARTY EYES VISIT WAS WELL-TIMED AND CONVENIENT HANDLE FOR DOOR-OPENING MEETINGS WITH PARTY OFFICIALS IN PARTY CAPACITIES AND WITH THREE YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS HERE-TO FORE SHUT OFF TO US. ACYPL GROUP CALLED ON HEADS OF SYRIAN REVOLUTIONARY YOUTH MOVEMENT, STUDENT UNION AND PIONEERS. SCHEDULE ALSO INCLUDED: CALLS ON FM AMERICAN DESK DIRECTOR, DAMASCUS UNIVERSITY RECTOR AND DEANS, PEOPLE'S COUNCIL COMMISSION FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS CHARIMAN MUHSIN BILAL AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION. LATTER SESSION ENDED NEAR MIDNIGHT ON DAY (JAN 15) WHOSE ACYPL SCHEDULE BEGAN AT 10:00 AM AND ENDED AT 3:30 AM THE FOLLOWING DAY WITH DINNER HOSTED BY BILAL. GROUP ALSO VISITED QUNEITRA AND WAS TO MEET WITH PNC CHAIRMAN KHALID FAHUM HERE AT
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SUGGESTION OF PEOPLE'S COUNCIL LUNCHEON HOSTS BUT ARRANGEMENT FELL THROUGH AFTER BEING SQUEEZED INTO PROGRAM WHEN FAHUM CALLED AWAY TO ANOTHER MEETING.

2. JAN 15 BEGAN EVEN EARLIER FOR POST WHEN FOUR IV GRANTEES SEEN OFF AT AIRPORT, THREE OF THEN FOR MEOP PARTICIPATION MADE POSSIBLE WHEN CU RESPONDED IN GOOD

FASHION AFTER SEARCHING THROUGH WITH NOMINATIONS/CLEARANCES ONLY AT LAST POSSIBLE MOMENT. CONVENIENTLY MEOP DELEGATION TRAVELLED ON SAME PLANE WITH MEDIA/GOVERNMENT PROJECT PARTICIPANT.

3. JANUARY 16 BROUGHT DISCOURAGING NEWS THAT MINCULTURE WOULD NOT APPROVE OUR PLANS FOR PIERRE AND ZARTMAN LECTURES ON POLITICAL SUBJECTS AT CULTURAL CENTER IN NEXT FEW DAYS. DEPMINCULTURE LUMAJI (MEMCON FOLLOWS) CAUTIONED WE MUST KEEP MINDFUL OF DISTINCTION BETWEEN CULTURAL AND INFORMATION CENTER BUT THAT SUCH PROGRAMMING MIGHT BE POSSIBLE "AT ANOTHER TIME" IF DONE AT SYRIAN INSTITUTIONS SUCH AS UNIVERSITIES. USEFUL SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS AND REPRESENTATIONAL AFFAIRS WOULD HAVE BEEN BULK OF PROGRAM IN ANY CASE AND WE ARE PROCEEDING WITH THESE.

4. PSYCHOLOGICAL: COINCIDENTIAL VISITS OF PIERRE, ZARTMAN, WILBUEN AND SAFRAN--THREE OF THEM POLITICAL SCIENTISTS-- IN SAME TIME FRAME AND SO SOON ON HEELS OF ACYPL HAS GIVEN SYRIAN WRONG MESSAGE, POSSIBLY CONTRIBUTING TO LUJAMI RESPONSE. SYRIAN HAVE ALSO ASSUMED-- WE ARE QUIETLY SETTING RECORD STRAIGHT--THAT SAFRAN VISIT A USIS ACTIVITY. IN MID-WEEK WE WERE HEARING CRITICISM IN ACADEMIC COMMUNITY THAT "THE CULTURAL CENTER HAS NO BUSINESS BRINGING THIS ZIONIST HERE." CRITICISM SEEMS TO HAVE ABATED BUT TISHRINE EDITOR GHASSAN RIFAI
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ATTENDED AMBASSADOR'S LUNCH FOR SAFRAN AND PROMISED IN JAN 20 COLUMN THAT HE WILL "ANSWER" SAFRAN IN NEXT (JAN 22) EDITION. WHILE RIFAI WILL LIKELY CONFINE HIMSELF TO ISSUES RAISED BY SAFRAN, WE SHALL REPORT SHOULD HE INCLUDE CULTURAL CENTER IN HIS CRITICISM.
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